

# INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE REVIEW



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Bulletin #49: Press: AFP photographer wins Visa d'Or News prize for Gaza coverage

[Van de megabom naar de steenslinger...]

[gulf-times.com](http://gulf-times.com)

## AFP photographer wins top prize for Gaza coverage

AFP/Perpignan, France

2-3 minutes

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Palestinian AFP photographer **Mahmud Hams** has won the prestigious Visa d'Or News prize for his coverage of the conflict in Gaza, the Visa pour l'Image Association announced Saturday. The 44-year-old, who has worked for AFP in the Palestinian territory since 2003, thanked the jury for the award in a recorded video message aired at the ceremony in Perpignan, France.

In a statement issued by AFP, he denounced the targeting of journalists during the conflict.

"I spent my childhood in Gaza, and in 23 years of photojournalism, I have witnessed every war, every conflict there," said Hams in the statement.

"But this war is unlike any other, without precedent from the very first day.

"My colleagues and I have had to face incredibly difficult conditions, with no red lines and no protections for anyone," he added.

"There were even attacks targeting journalists' offices, which are supposed to be off-limits in times of war.

"Many journalists have been killed; others wounded. I've also lost friends and loved ones. We struggled to keep our families safe," he said.

Hams left Gaza with his family in February.

"I hope the photos we take show the world that this war, and the suffering, must end," he added.

Eric Baradat, AFP's Deputy News Director for Photo, Graphics, Data and Archives, paid

tribute to his work.

"Mahmud and his colleagues, photographers and journalists from AFP in the Gaza Strip, have carried out extraordinary work in every respect, considering the conditions in which they lived with their families and loved ones," he said.

"It is staggering and often unimaginable. Their testimony will be recorded in history," he added.

On November 2, the office building, which had been evacuated a few days earlier, was badly damaged by a strike, probably caused by Israeli tank fire, according to an investigation conducted by AFP and several international media outlets.

[correspondent.afp.com](https://correspondent.afp.com)

## The man in the wheelchair

Mahmud Hams

2–3 minutes

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*Gaza-based **Mahmud Hams** received top honors in the photo category at the 25th Bayeux-Calvados War Correspondents Prize for his image of a wheelchair-bound demonstrator during the "Great March of Return" protests earlier this year.*

*A 38-year-old resident of the Gaza Strip, Hams has covered numerous conflicts, from demonstrations to incursions by the Israeli army. Here he describes the particulars of these protests.*



*Figure 1: Protests along the Gaza-Israel border, May 4, 2018. (AFP/Mahmud Hams)*

**Gaza City** -- In some ways, these protests were more dangerous than when we've had an Israeli attack or incursion. Protesters began going to the fence between Israel and Gaza as part of the "Great March of Return" demonstrations. The protests peaked the day the US moved its embassy to Jerusalem, and have continued since.

As more and more people went to the protests, the number of injuries increased -- more than 5,000 wounded by gunfire since March.

The man in the wheelchair is a known activist/protester and came to the fence every week. His name is Saber Al-Ashqar and believe it or not he is only 29. He looks a lot older. He comes on a bus and his friends help him get down and accompany him to the protest site.



*Figure 2: (AFP/Mahmud Hams)*

There were two other handicapped men who were also regular demonstrators, but they have since been killed. Two journalists were killed in the protests as well, despite wearing clear markings.

This is the first time that I can remember that such huge protests have taken place in an open area so near the border. People used to be afraid to approach the fence as it's very exposed and there are Israeli snipers on the lookout.

Being injured is scary enough, but being injured in Gaza is especially so, since medicine is in short supply. So of course I was scared when covering this story. But it's my job.



*Figure 3: A Palestinian man uses a slingshot to throw a stone towards Israeli forces as smoke billows from burning tyres during a demonstration along the border with the Gaza strip east of Gaza city on June 1, 2018. (AFP/Mahmud Hams)*